

HON. MARCY KAPTUR
Â OF OHIO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TUESDAY, JUNEÂ 20, 2006Â

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Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this day of June 20, 2006, marks the 1-month anniversary of the mining disaster in Harlan County, Kentucky, where five miners were killed in another mine accident.

I started thinking about the history of Harlan County and in paying tribute to these five brave Americans wanted to place in the **RECORD** the fact that these miners are from a region of our country that has been home to generations of coal miners with entire communities dependent on the mines.

While the coal mines have gotten somewhat safer with deaths steadily declining as a result of stricter safety laws passed by the Congress of the United States, coal mining remains one of our Nation's most dangerous professions.

This year has been a particularly deadly year. Our Nation held its breath before learning of the 12 deaths at the Sago Mine in West Virginia, and then we mourned with the families in Harlan County, Kentucky, after learning of the deaths of five miners killed at the Darby Mine in May.

With the year just half over, we have already seen 33 coal mining deaths 6 months into this year.

The names of Harlan County's most recent fatalities, Roy Middleton, Amon ``Cotton" Brock, Jimmy D. Lee, and George William Petra and Paris Thomas, Jr., will now be added to a

memorial honoring the ultimate sacrifice made by 1,200 coal miners that were killed in Harlan County since 1912.

Harlan County has been the site of mammoth labor organizing battles between the United Mine Workers strike and the region's coal mining companies. The bloody strikes of the 1930s and 1973 earned Harlan County the nickname "Bloody Harlan." Coal miners from this region know all too well the dangers of this dirty and dangerous business.

The five miners from the Darby mine in Harlan County have joined another 104,574 miners that perished in our Nation's coal mines since 1900. To put this into perspective, this number would be about equivalent to one-third of the entire population of the largest city I represent, Toledo, Ohio. And keep in mind this number only accounts for the actual deaths, not the countless others that have been maimed in our Nation's dangerous mines.

On this 1-month anniversary of these horrific deaths, Congress can point to recently passed legislation. But you know, Mr. Speaker, a couple hours' oxygen won't solve the problem either. This act certainly strengthens the mine safety requirements enforced by the Mine Safety and Health Administration, but what good does the law do for a grieving widow or an orphaned child?

As our Nation struggles with another coal mining tragedy, I would like to place into the **RECORD** an old coal mining song, "Come All You Coal Miners," sung by Sarah Gunning. Hopefully, some of the words in this song will remind us of those who have laid down their lives for us and the other 110,000 miners that go into the mines every day in this country facing death every single one of those days.

Some of the words of the song read: "They take your very lifeblood, and they take our children's lives. They take fathers away from children and husbands away from wives. Oh, miner, won't you organize wherever you may be and make this a land of freedom for workers like you and me."